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the first session of the twenty-fourth Congress, and noticed by us in a late number,* proposes the preparation and publication of an extensive work, containing the entire statistics of the United States, in the broadest sense of the expression; so as to exhibit, that is, the actual state and condition of the United States, in respect of the surface, soil, and natural resources of the country; its productions; the industry and commerce of the inhabitants; their relations, social, religious, and political, and the relations of civilization and social improvement, so far as they can be indicated by specific facts; — all this information to be collected and published under the authority of the United States. Professor Lieber gives a sketch of the particular classes of facts which such a work should comprise; he shows the utility of it; the attention bestowed on the subject by other nations; the impossibility of the task being thoroughly and satisfactorily executed, except by the aid and through the agents of the government; and the consequent duty of the Federal Government to undertake it.

No decisive action upon the subject has yet been had in Congress; but, either in the comprehensive form proposed by Professor Lieber, or if otherwise, then in connexion with the taking of the census as suggested by the Editor of the Almanac, we think it is an object, the favorable consideration of which, by Congress, would receive the hearty sanction of the people of the United States.

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12. — *First Exhibition and Fair of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association, at Fanewil and Quincy Halls, in the City of Boston, September 18th, 1837.* Boston; published by Dutton & Wentworth, for the Association. 1837.

WE rejoice in the appearance of this pamphlet, for many reasons. In the first place, it gives us an opportunity to express, under the form which etiquette allows to such journals, our satisfaction at the exhibition it describes, and to offer our thanks to the Mechanic Association for the rich treat they afforded us at their Fair. We know not when we have attended a more interesting exhibition. There is a peculiar beauty in mechanical work of every kind, when well executed; no matter what is the object of the article, no matter how homely the purpose to which it is to be applied, how awkward the form, how ungainly the motion,

* North American Review, Vol. XLIII. p. 264.

still there is beauty in it if well finished. A simple knife, a door-latch, a bit-stock, a carpenter's rule, has its own beauty, unlike that of any thing else; and it is a kind of beauty which all people enjoy. The most uneducated and unrefined perceive and appreciate it, the most learned and polished are equally touched by it. We certainly never witnessed an exhibition, from which greater numbers could derive pleasure than from this. For ourselves, it seemed as if we could never be tired with looking and admiring, and we came away from the halls with a feeling of strong gratitude to those who had offered us such a beautiful entertainment.

Had we been asked to give an account of what we had seen, we fear we should have made but a lame story of it. In the immense number and variety of the objects, the eye was wearied with looking, and the brain with comprehending; so that if we had been urged to describe the fair, we should have been disposed to answer in schoolboy phrase, "I knew till you asked me." The pamphlet before us helps us out of this difficulty; it classifies the objects, and by its brief descriptions calls many to mind which we should have entirely forgotten, and presents vividly before us many that we remembered but indistinctly and confusedly.

To attempt to give an account of those articles which pleased us most by their elegant finish, their ingenious contrivances, or their useful purposes, would occupy far more space than the limits of this notice allow. We wandered through a labyrinth of beautiful objects in every department of the mechanic arts, constantly finding cause for new interest and delight to the last. To endeavour to comprehend or even to see all the works with which the fair abounded, would have been foolish. Those who have peculiar interest in any one of the mechanical arts, would undoubtedly have found room for the gratification of their tastes and the improvement of their knowledge in that branch. Those who have only a general interest in the advance of those arts, would derive great pleasure, though less improvement. It was much like going through a great library. We saw there the means of studying many, perhaps most of the branches of mechanical art; but to the casual observer this was all that the time allowed; and we passed on, looking at the various beautiful objects, with much the same feeling that we should experience in looking at the backs of books in a rare collection.

There were other effects of the exhibition on the minds of many, probably more important than these. The idea of the labor which produced all, was almost frightful. And yet it was

encouraging. It seemed as if the nerve and sinew of our community were laid open to us. In the midst of the excitement, civil, religious, and political, which prevails over the whole land, it was comforting to think that here were the results of the labor of a great number of people, who are constantly and steadily at work in some productive occupation ; who have the firmness and stability of good men ; who form one of the largest classes of our citizens ; and who will perhaps be the very last to abandon the principles in which they have been educated as American citizens. They seem to partake of the solidity and strength of their own machines.

Besides this, we were much impressed with the high finish of every thing we saw. Many a man whose walks are in intellectual paths might learn a good lesson from this. How perfect were the machines ! how beautiful the workmanship of everything ! how admirable the finish ! Here, indeed, we seemed to have found perfection. The trades are dissatisfied if their work is not completed thoroughly, and as well as it can be. And shall the scholar, the professional man, be willing that the finish of his own education, the tools he has to work with, the armor in which he is to fight, should be incomplete, slovenly, and clumsy ?

We trust that the exhibition will be continued annually after this ; and we will venture to promise the gentlemen who manage it, that a more popular haunt will never be found in Boston, than the halls they may fill with their beautiful productions.

NOTE.

The Editor of this journal finds it proper to give notice, that the transmission of books, by authors or booksellers, cannot be considered as imposing on him any obligation in respect to such works, beyond that of entering their titles in the List of New Publications. He is often made acquainted, in this manner, with works, which he is gratified in having opportunity to commend. But the question, whether books, coming in this way, shall be passed by, or noticed with praise or with censure, has been, and will continue to be, determined on the same principles as if they were obtained by purchase.

Several Critical Notices, which had been prepared for this number, some of them in type, are unavoidably omitted.
